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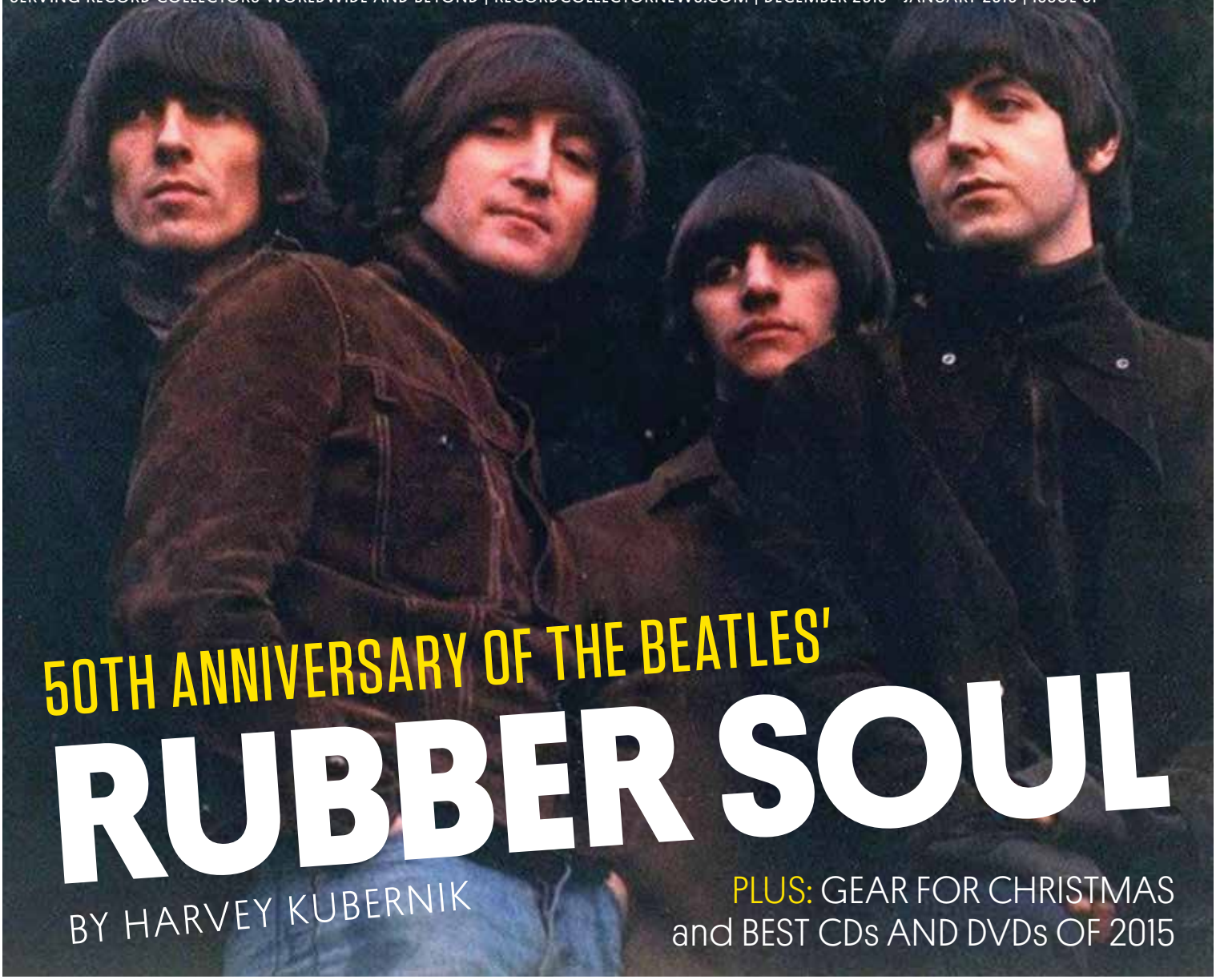

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RUBBER SOUL

BY HARVEY KUBERNIK

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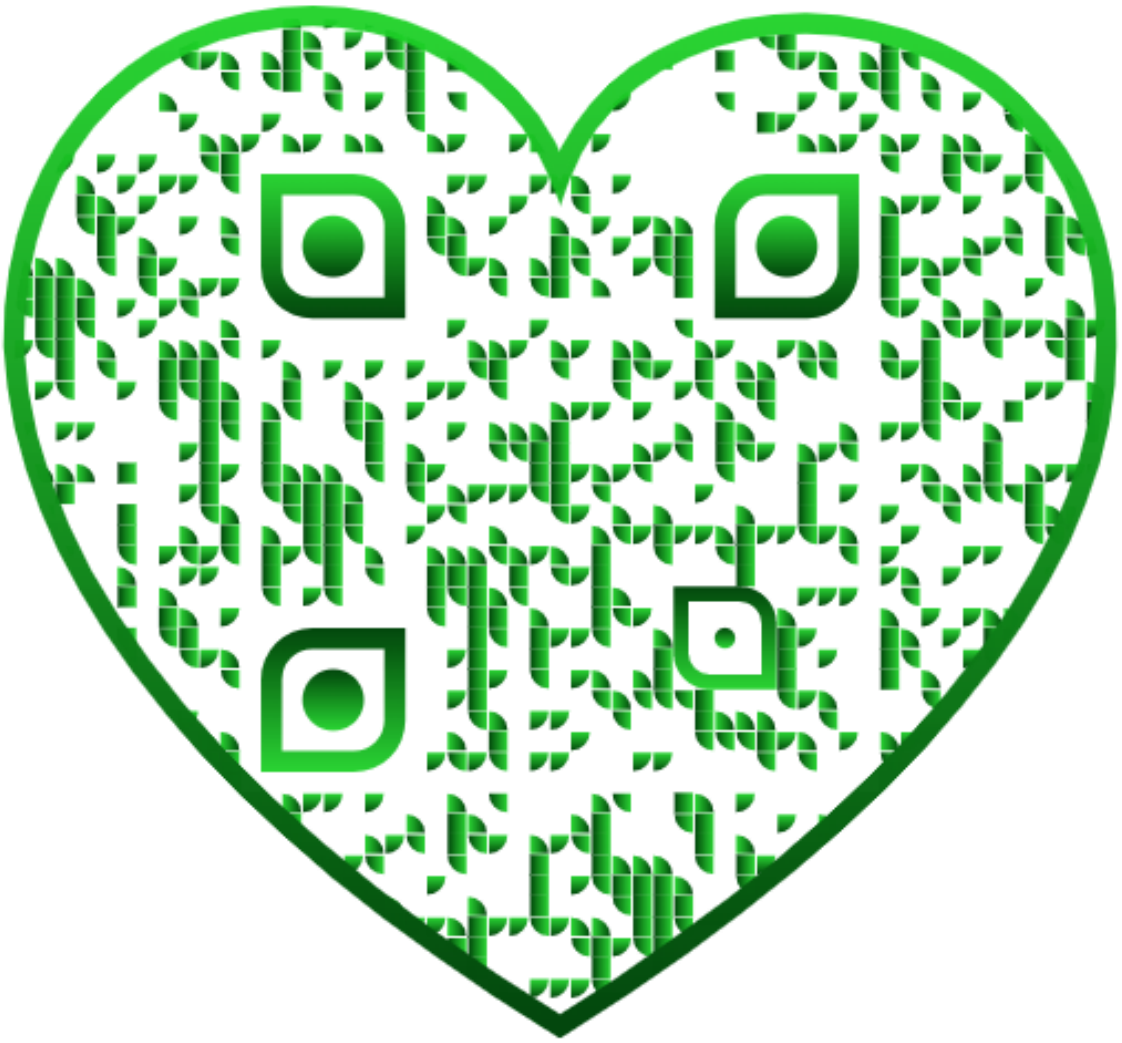

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- P.F. Sloan

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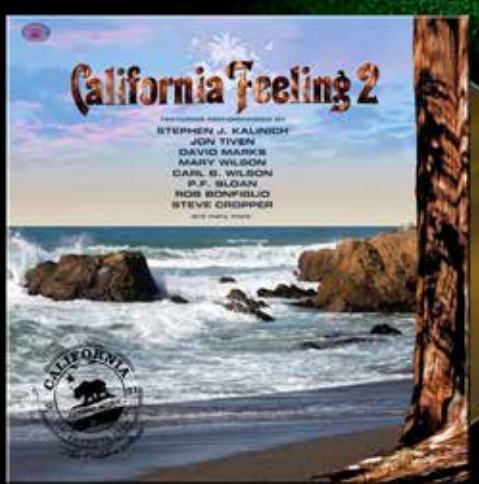

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JIM KAPLAN – PUBLISHER

CONTRIBUTORS
Lance Baresi, Wendy Block, Greg Burk, Deke Dickerson, Bob Donnelly. Maya Eslami, Michael Fremer, Gillian G. Gaar, Cary Ginell, Ralph Hulett, Seth Kasselman, Harvey Kubernik, David Lancon, Dennis Leonis, Armand Lewis, Greg McWhorter, Ric Menck, Richard Morris, Mike Nipper, Peter Palmiere, Steve Propes, Suzanne Rush, Robby Russell, Michael Sigman, Neal Skok, Dean Smokoff, Sean Sprinkel, David Thomson, Richie Unterberger
Japanese Translation: Keiko Thang

DESIGN
suzannerush.net

WEB DESIGN
designsimple.com

RCN WORLD HEADQUARTERS
818-30V-INYL
818-308-4695

ADVERTISING/MARKETING
Elliot Kendall
elliot@recordcollectornews.com
424-832-6044

EDITORIAL / CALENDAR
818-30V-INYL
818-308-4695

EMAIL
jim@recordcollectornews.com

WEBSITE
recordcollectornews.com

ADDRESS
Record Collector News
P.O. Box 5664, Glendale, CA 91221

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PUSHIN' TOO HARD
THE SEEDS

Musician, composer, actor, and director Neil Norman proudly presents his full-length rock'n'roll documentary film which tells the fantastic, gleeful, tragic tale of 1960s garage rock legends THE SEEDS! Using vintage footage, rare photos, memorabilia and audio, and fresh interviews with band members and associates, as well as notable fans and observers, "The Seeds: Pushin' Too Hard" relates the bizarre rage-to-riches-to-rags tale of the rock quartet who took Los Angeles by storm in the mid-60s, and is credited with creating the idea of "flower power."

Featuring Iggy Pop, Kim Fowley and many other scene heavyweights, you will see why the documentary has been called a “quintessential” rock tale [New Times] and the band christened the “key progenitors of garage rock and psychedelia” [Ugly Things].

Accompanying the movie’s screenings are killer reissues with unreleased tracks, lavish packaging and liner notes that are a real treat for true fans.

“A MUST SEE FILM.”
New Times

“HOT, TERSE 45S”
Rolling Stone

“THIS MAY HAVE HAVE BEEN THE BEST LIVE ACT OF THE ENTIRE GARAGE-PUNK ERA.” Shindig

“SKY GOT IT RIGHT.”
Kim Fowley

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KAPLAN'S KORNER

Little Sprout, Big Inside

Respect the Sprout

I ALWAYS GET A KICK OUT OF HOW short some of my favorite movie and rock stars are. Especially my favorite action heroes. You can get a lot out of a small package. That's what the **Sprout** from **PS Audio** in Boulder Colorado is like. Small of stature but packed with features and mighty of heart.

It features a phono preamplifier for vinyl, a Bluetooth receiver for music streamed from smartphones, a high-quality hi-res DAC to handle anything stored on a laptop, enough power for any speaker, and a headphone amp that drives even the toughest loads.

The operating principal of the Sprout seems to be simplicity. Which is pretty cool considering all it does.

Connect the left and right speakers. Plug the turntable into the left and right analog inputs. Attach the ground to the ground post. Turn it on. Rock out.

Do the specs even matter? We're rocking some vinyl here.

I was able to put the Sprout through its paces in a number of configurations.

We first hooked the Sprout up to a pair of Linn Kaliegh floor standing speakers and a Technics SL1300 automatic turntable in my son's room. The Sprout rocked the Linns with ease.

Then my kid switched the Sprout to Bluetooth and started playing his digital library. Very nice. More compelling sounding music.

Next I snatched the Sprout away from the small system and hooked it up to the PSB Imagine T200's and the Clearaudio Performance with the Clearaudio MM Maestro Ebony cartridge. While the Turntable might have been a little overkill for the built in Sprout phono stage, the sound was smooth, compelling and tons of fun.

Next I hooked the Sprout up to my iMac for some near field listening. The Sprout smoked the $1,100 DAC I've been using and sounded crazy good through the Napa Acoustic speakers with and the WyWires Silver USB cable. Too good for background listening, I kept getting sucked into the music and out of whatever I was working on. I bet I could get used to it though.

I've listened to the Sprout now for a number of weeks and found the Sprout to be well built, extremely handy, you can plug it in anywhere, and perfect for entry level or a second system.

At $499 it's a steal. Get one at your local PS Audio Dealer or online at psaudio.com.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Rocking Riva

LAST JUNE AT T.H.E. SHOW NEWport Beach I walked into a room and was bathed in some great sounding music, which was generated from a small box on a chair in the middle of the room. The **Riva Bluetooth** speaker had me looking behind curtains for sub woofers and satellites. Nope. Just Riva. So I was pretty stoked when they offered me one for review.

The timing was perfect as I was just about to start delivering the Tower Records Documentary issue. The RCN World Delivery Vehicle has pretty crappy sound. The cassette deck eats cassettes. So I tossed the Riva in the passenger seat and grooved on the 20,000 songs available to me via that cloud thing on the apple.

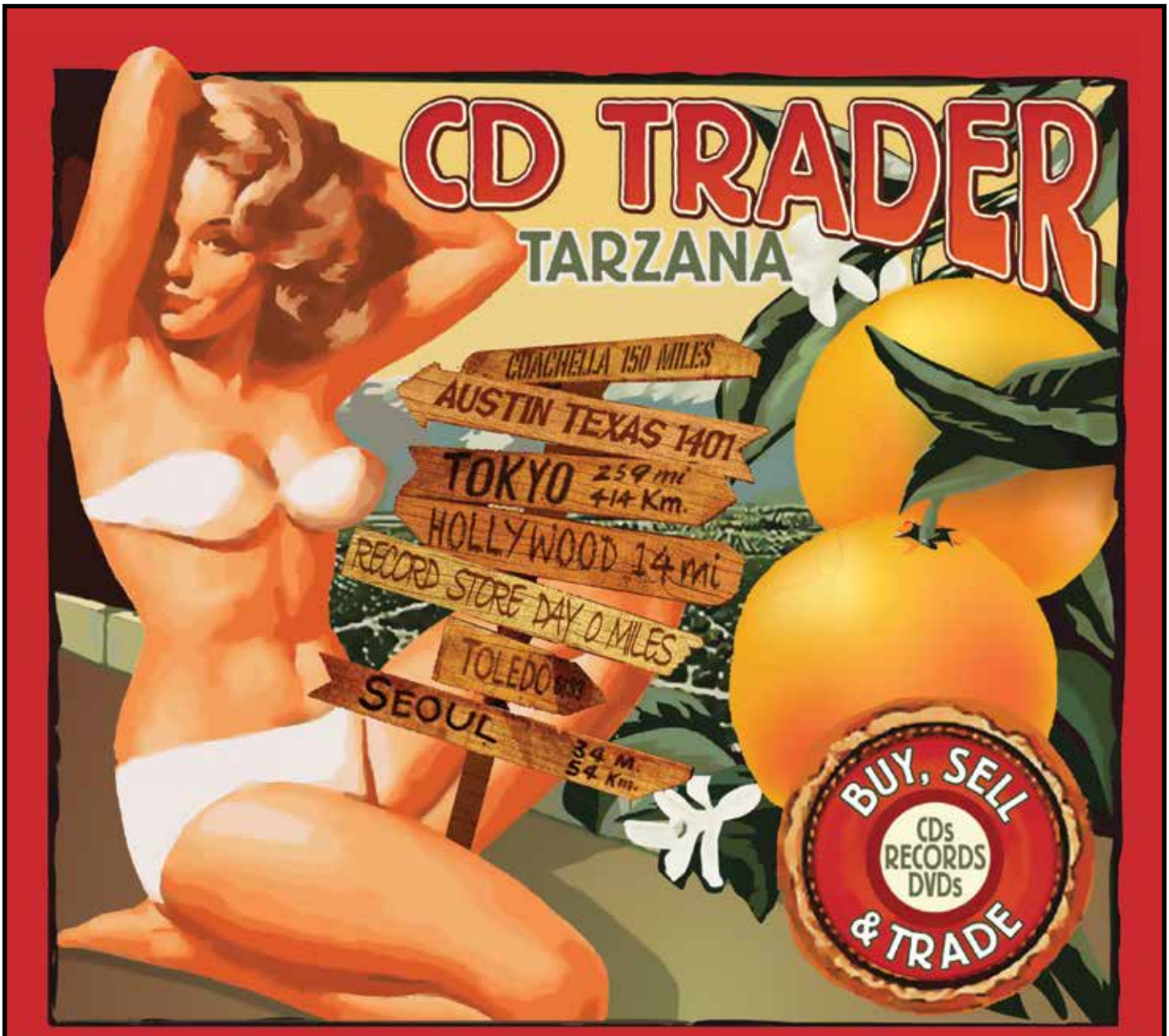
At about $299 the Riva Turbo provides an impressive 26 plus hours of battery playing time, a USB charging port for your phone or other devices, a speakerphone which was really handy driving all over heck delivering papers and it seems to be build like a brick temple to music. It takes a licking and keeps on rocking.

My daughter came home from college and fell in love with the Riva and went on about how the RIVA would make the PERFECT gift for that freshman's dorm room.

She's right. The Riva is that high quality Bluetooth speaker that sounds great and goes anywhere. No doubt the Riva will still be rocking as solidly when she graduates in four years. Five years?

Happy Holidays everyone.

Jim Kaplan



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50 Years of Rubber Soul

Rubber Soul — the album that changed the musical world we lived in then, to the one we still live in today.

—Andrew Loog Oldham

BY HARVEY KUBERNIK

RUBBER SOUL WAS THE BEATLES' FIRST RELEASE not to feature their name on the album's cover, an uncommon strategy in late 1965. The cover photo was by Robert Freeman, snapped in John Lennon's garden in Weybridge.

I bought a British import copy of *Rubber Soul* on Hollywood Blvd. around the corner from the Capitol Records tower building at the fabled Lewin Record Paradise. I then purchased a stereo one at Thrifty's Drugs on Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles. I took it to a party in downtown L.A. and watched my brand new LP get tossed into traffic on La Brea Ave., by a couple of soul brother party-goers irate about "Beatles stealin' and took from us again." This is a few months after the summer 1965 Watts riots. I stated my case to some angry Bubble Up drinkers that in a newspaper, at a U.S. press conference, Paul McCartney, a devoted music fan, lauded the "colored music" and the sounds of the Motown label.

Our record hop got racial and facial. Someone hurled a pack of Kool Menthol cigarettes at me. So I hitchhiked home, from the corner of Vermont and Jefferson at 11:30 at night. But, not after a quick spin the bottle sympathy session with a couple of girls who were in my junior high school homeroom. Then they didn't speak to me the rest of the semester.

Paul McCartney suggested the title *Rubber Soul*. A parody on the relationship white musicians constantly developed with influential Negro music. "Rubber Soul" was a term a Negro musician described the 1964 and '65 sound of the Rolling Stones' lead singer, Mick Jagger.

During a Beatles' recording session for a take on 1964's "I'm Down," later housed on *Anthology 2*," McCartney utters the phrase, "plastic soul, man, plastic soul."

In a 1997 interview with me, George Harrison explained that he had first heard the sitar instrument on the set of The Beatles' movie *Help!* Later that year, he would record with it on the session for John Lennon's "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)."

George told me about his earliest attempt at playing the sitar with the Beatles, "Very rudimentary. I didn't know how to tune it properly, and it was a very cheap sitar to begin with. So 'Norwegian Wood' was very much an early experiment. By the time we recorded 'Love You Too' I had made some strides.

"That was the environment in the band. Everybody was very open to bringing in new ideas. We were listening to all sorts of things, Stockhausen, avant-garde music, whatever, and most of it made its way onto our records."

"TODAY WE THINK OF THE BEATLES EPIC AS ONE INCREDIBLE breathless run, and it did all happen very fast, their 8 or 9 dizzying years," offers writer and author. Daniel Weizmann. "But on close inspection, before *Rubber Soul*, there was a subtle sense that the Beatles were... almost starting to run out of steam, exhausted from all that mop-shaking. And who can blame them?

Beatlemania would have driven four less durable souls into an insane asylum. *Beatles for Sale*, *Beatles VI*, *Help!* — the songs are great but some near-invisible identity crisis is at work in them, a groping for more. In an alternate, less beautiful universe, the band might have even thrown in the towel right then and there. Which is partially why *Rubber Soul* is such a miracle — it's not just an album, it's an announcement that they would not back down. They had stripped down to essentials, learned to stifle their own cuteness, and were ready to push past youth, guided by introspection.

They aren't there yet, but the plot had thickened —

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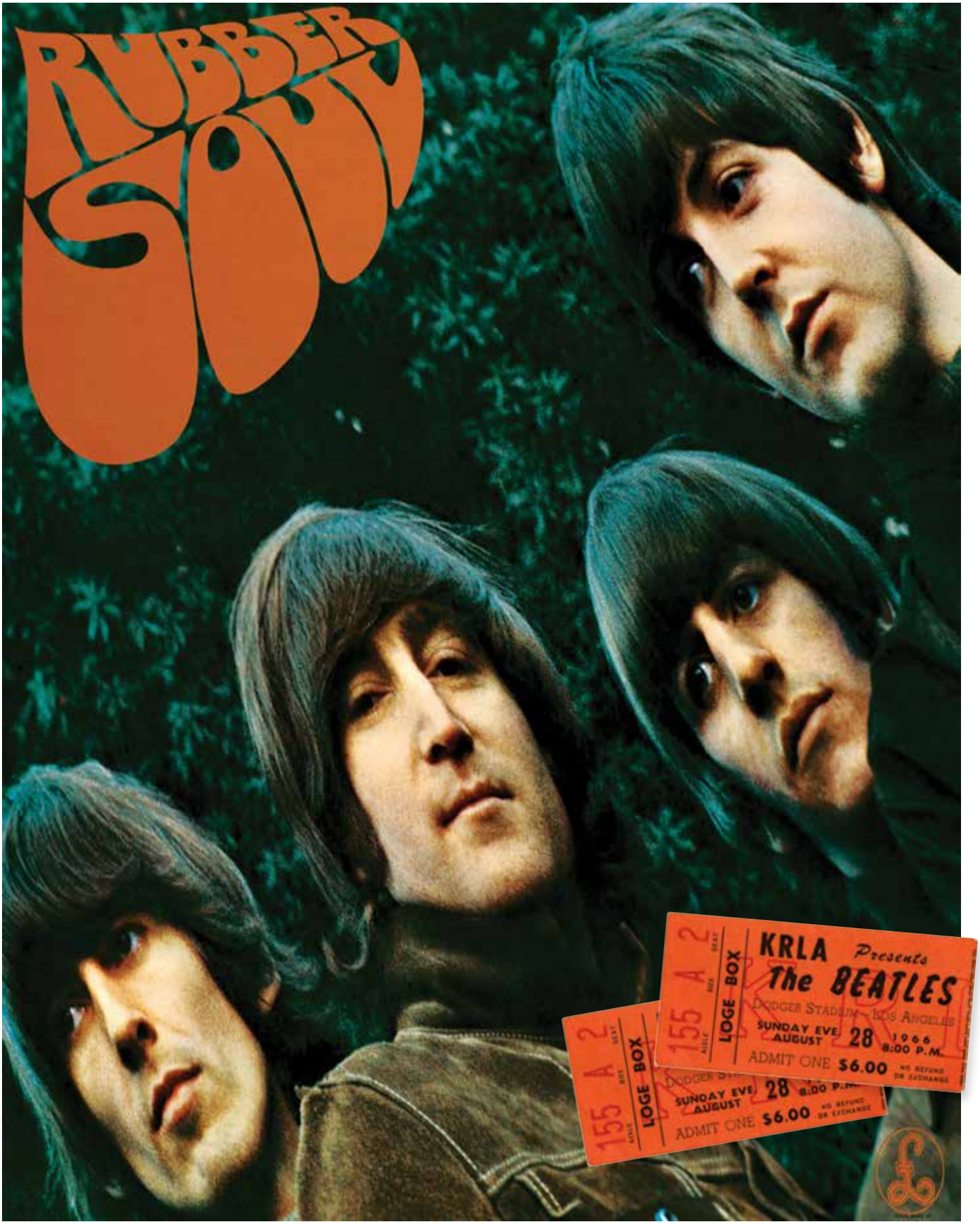
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

and *Rubber Soul* is the first chapter of Act II, the very best part of the story."

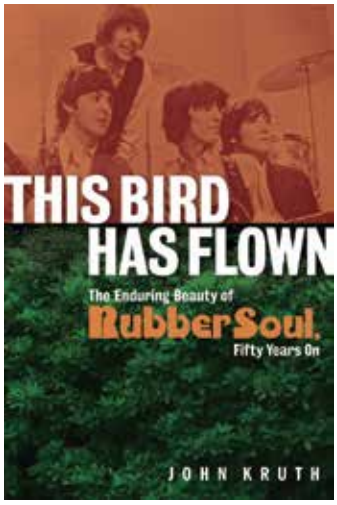
"Firstly, what a fabulous elasticisable title! Puts it all in the perfect perspective," volunteers Australian-based music historian and author, Ritchie Yorke. "Creativity grows. And it shows. On Rubber Soul, we are seeing the beast that became John Lennon's composing heart is gaining traction and he's beginning to let it flow on through. How blessed we were that it flowed upon our watch. And in our presence. A wonderful album made most of us realize that there was a lot more to these dudes than just pulling off limp versions of great R & B tunes."

Author John Kruth has just published *This Bird Has Flown The Enduring Beauty of Rubber Soul, Fifty Years On*. His book reminds us how quick the LP was done.

"Written and recorded at breakneck speed, between October 12 and November 11th, (1965) *Rubber Soul* was clearly a game-changer, not just for the Beatles themselves, but as a work whose sound and ideas has lasted for decades, impacting nearly everything that transpired in popular music in its wake."

Richard Bosworth is a longtime music producer/engineer who worked at Abbey Road.

"One of the other reasons the Beatles' recordings sound so good still to this day," Bosworth maintains, "is that the tape



machine format was one-inch 4-track — a much wider tape width per track than any other analog tape format that has ever been conceived. The equivalent of 24-track would require that the tape format be six inches wide to get the same fidelity that the one-inch 4-track provided.

"Norman Smith engineered virtually every studio performance of the band from 1962 through 1965. On *Rubber Soul*, Smith captured innovative new sounds such as fuzz bass guitar, sitar and distinctly dry vocals.

"There's a definite delineation point in the record production and musical instrument sounds for The Beatles with the release of *Rubber Soul*. There were hints of what was to come on *Help!* ('You've Got To Hide You're Love Away'). Many influential American musicians of the day believe the U.S. version of *Rubber Soul* is one of the greatest albums ever (including Brian Wilson). In fact the opening songs on both sides of the American *Rubber Soul*, 'I've Just Seen A Face' and 'It's Only Love' respectively, are two tracks from the English *Help!* LP and set an introspective acoustic tone for the American release."

Big sonic changes are introduced on *Rubber Soul* with the actual electric guitars and the guitar amplifiers the band adopted at this point. Up until now they had stuck with the musical instruments they're famously known for. Gretsch and Rickenbacker guitars for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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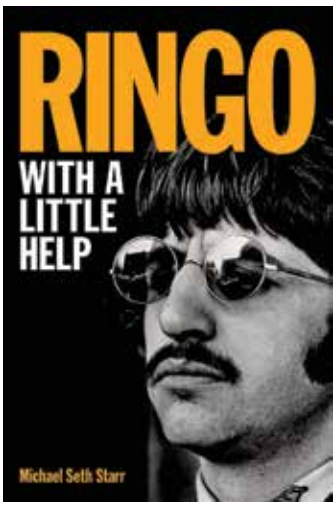
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

Lennon and Harrison and Hofner 500/1 bass guitar for McCartney, via various Vox guitar amplifiers. Rickenbacker had made a left handed 4001S electric bass guitar for McCartney that he received on the Beatles 1964 U.S. Tour and except for one song, "Drive My Car", he used his new Rick bass exclusively on *Rubber Soul*. As the Rick is solid body as opposed to the hollow body Hofner, It gave a more solid electric bass sound than the more acoustic qualities of the Hofner.

"Whereas McCartney gravitated to Rickenbacker, Lennon and Harrison moved on to Fender, Gibson and Epiphone electric guitars," reminds Bosworth. "The Beatles were aware of the brand of American guitars and amplifiers used by their idols Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry. However these were not available in England until 1965. Harrison and Lennon acquired twin sonic blue Fender Stratocasters which they used to great effect on "Nowhere Man" (U.S. single/British album release.) Harrison added a Gibson SG Standard and a Gibson ES-345-TD to his arsenal. Lennon, Harrison and McCartney all purchased Epiphone ES-230-TD Casino guitars and these became their 'go to' instruments for the next several albums and the 1966 tours.

"The Epiphone Casino became Lennon's main guitar for the duration of the Beatles career and he used it exclusively on his first solo album and the 'Cold Turkey' Plastic Ono Band single," underlines Bosworth.



"During the Beatles' 1965 U.S. tour, Harrison was given a second Rickenbacker 360-12 by a Minneapolis radio station and he utilized it on 'If I Needed Someone' (British album release) in a tribute to the sound of The Byrds.

"Aware that many American musicians used Fender Musical Instrument's guitar and bass amplifiers they began to buy a steady supply that continued right through the *Abbey Road* album. McCartney got a blonde Fender Bassman amp and soon after Harrison and Lennon bought two Fender Showman rigs with 15" JBL D130 speakers. They still used Vox amps as well. They had an endorsement deal with Vox since 1963 and once that was in place the Beatles never appeared live without Vox amps. The company always supplied the band with their latest models and during this period both Lennon and Harrison received the ultra rare Vox 7120 electric guitar amplifier and McCartney was given the equally rare Vox 4120 bass amp."

During the *Rubber Soul* sessions, the group cut the double A side single "We Can Work It Out/Day Tripper." During these dates is when the band began questioning the production authority and sonic techniques of George Martin and the recording engineering staff of EMI Studios. They had garnered

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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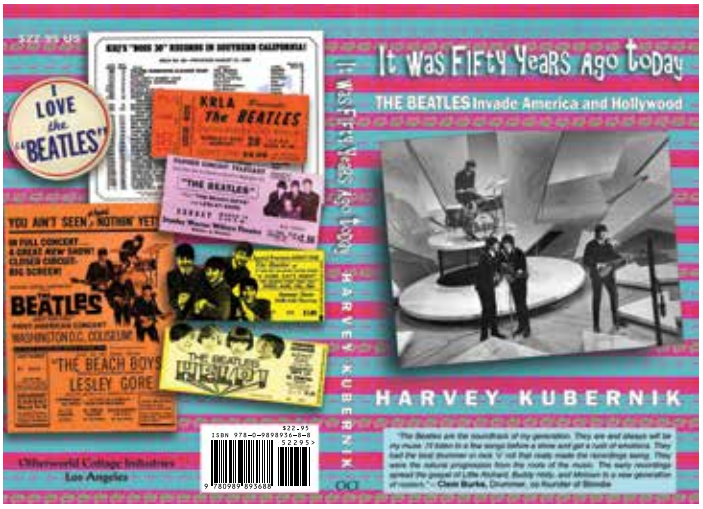
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

commercial success and wanted to expand the music beyond their initial Beatlemania sound, both vocally and instrumentally.

"I think vocally the Beatles are influenced by Bob Dylan during this period," delineates Bosworth. "They had noticed there weren't effects like reverb and vocal delay on Dylan's vocals and it gave his performance an intimacy that really suited the lyrics.

"The Beatles own lyrics were taking on a new depth and they felt this kind of vocal sound would accommodate the new songs. They would say to George Martin and recording engineer Norman Smith 'Why do our vocals have to have echo on every song? Why do we always have to do things the same way every time?' With the release of *Rubber Soul*, the Beatles signaled they were not going to be artistically trapped by their success."

"*Rubber Soul* seemed the first Beatles' album released in the U.S. more or less to correspond



to its U.K. counterpart, 1965 being rather late in the game to issue the themed Beatle musical think pieces recorded at the same session rather than grab-bags of singles from one and meat and potatoes from another two or three," suggests photographer Heather Harris, the former Entertainment Editor of the UCLA *Daily Bruin*.

"Therefore American fans could rejoice simultaneously with their British our new musical heroes waxed experimental while still remaining front runners in the pop game. Brian Wilson wasn't the only one who noticed. Harpsichord, Franglais, actual threatened violence, Dylantries et al. stewed and brewed through ... the world's best selling pop band?! We teens reveled in the high caliber of largesse from these songwriters, only to find it successively topped in the 2 years to come with *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper*. Acute bliss.

"Lastly, psychedelic font lettering on an anamorphic stretch photo by Robert Freeman, exponent of natural and directional lighting, and director of *Performance*-type precursor insofar as it deftly balanced fey pop culture and butch violence, The Touchables. That cover: pure inspiration, in and of itself and to anyone interesting in the field of graphic art, photography and trailblazing visuals..."

"I WANT TO GIVE EXTRA PROPS to the U.S. *Rubber Soul*," hails musician Jim Wilson of Motor Sister, who previously worked with Sparks and Daniel Lanois. "Of course I love the 14 track U.K. version, but as a young record collector who grew up with a mid-'70s Apple pressing, I've always have a soft spot for the American track listing. Plus, it has all the songs you played with your buddies when the acoustic guitars came out.

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"Now, the U.S. *Revolver* suffers in comparison because you're just getting less tracks, but I really dig the *Rubber Soul* mix with the folky *Help!* songs. Besides, we got all the extras on *Yesterday & Today* with a great cover photo to stare at (two actually!). And no matter what John Lennon says, I absolutely worship 'It's Only Love.' Oh yeah, don't forget we got the cool false start on 'I'm Looking Through You.' You have to have them both!"

"I WAS LISTENING AGAIN TO *Rubber Soul* today, trying to think which songs would work as flute instrumentals and I couldn't really throw them out," muses vocalist and flute player," Libbie Jo Snyder.

In my current-decade recording, *Reflections: A Beatles Tribute* I played 'Michelle' and 'In My Life.' I think the Beatles' melodies might last as long as humankind lasts. They are lively, soulful, original and well-crafted with great variety of character and feel, and, they are great fun to play on the flute!

Even 'Baby You Can Drive My Car' would be fun on bass flute with piccolos playing that instrumental hook that goes through the song — just one idea of the many that floated through as I was listening. I don't tire of playing their songs."

In 1998, I interviewed Elvis Costello in Hollywood during his *Painted By Memory* recording sessions with Burt Bacharach. We briefly discussed *Rubber Soul*.

"I have a perspective on it that someone of my years probably shouldn't have. I always heard Burt's tunes in cover form first. And that was important. The stuff that my [musician] dad brought home were 'A' label singles.

"Like The Beatles ones I had were the non-single tracks like 'Michelle,' and songs from *Rubber Soul* that they (Northern Songs) thought were better suited for covers than, maybe, 'Drive My Car' was. They were sent over on demonstration acetates. Rather than having the Parlophone label, which never pressed 'Michelle'

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

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as a single, Dick James Music (Northern Songs), the publisher, pressed an acetate. And that was how small they were thinking about that 'radio cover.'"

"*RUBBER SOUL* IS BEAUTIFUL," proclaims Greg Franco, Rough Church bandleader. "There is a switch for the Beatles. Well-groomed fun loving, fashion plates, cute boys, mop tops, (actually they were a scrappy bunch of hoodlums in the Hamburg days) Brian Epstein turned them into a boy band, but they were smoked out by Dylan. Not too many boy bands were smoked out by him after that.

"Chaos became embedded in the later part of the decade, but the Beatles kept us from going crazy. I think we are at a similar place in the themes of change in the middle part of this decade, but will different and similar issues, We gotta get through this, but maybe we don't have yet the voices of the decade in focus. Maybe we will still have to listen then to a 50 year old record to be inspired. Beatles! Thanks for giving us a *Rubber Soul*."

DURING NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER, *Isn't It Good? The Beatles' Rubber Soul*, a syndicated National Public Radio documen-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

It was 50 Years Ago Today

IN 1967 "...TWENTY YEARS AGO TODAY" REPRESENTED A LIFETIME TO A twenty year old listening for the first time to the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* lyrics," ponders Michael Fremer, the editor of analogplanet.com and senior contributing editor, *Stereophile*.

"Fifty years ago today was then an unimaginable dark expanse of time. Yet here we are, on the Fiftieth anniversary of Rubber Soul's release, still writing and talking about an album that today twenty year olds still listen to — some of us lucky enough to be able to pull from a shelf and play the very vinyl copy we bought in the fall of 1965 and hear it sounding as clean and fresh as it did that memorable first play [and sounding more life-like than any tinny digital reissue].

"Fifty years later it feels to me like yesterday [though my troubles don't seem so far away] that after counting down the days to its arrival there, I drove down the hill from Cornell to a hole-in-the-wall Ithaca, New York record store to buy that copy.

"Back then, you may have heard on an AM radio station about a record's release [we listened to 'clear station' WWKB 1520, in Buffalo, New York for all things Beatles] but you didn't get to see the 12x12 cover art until you confronted it in person.

I can still see myself standing in front of the counter gasping at the solemn faces of the even longer haired quartet, who last time I met them were like carefree kids. 'Uh oh,' I remember telling myself, 'What's wrong? Did I miss something? What happened?' *Rubber Soul*? They don't look so bouncy. Am I going to have to get somber now too?

"I remember putting the record on my Dual 1009SK turntable and the Koss Pro 4A headphones on my head and lying in my frat-house bed for that first listen. 'What? Is this a country and western album? Is that why George is wearing a cowboy outfit on the back cover?' Then comes a sitar [not that I knew what it was] and 'having a girl' or her 'having me.' 'She said it's time for bed?' Not in my world! What's that weird fuzzy sound? The word is good? Lyrics in French?"

"And that was just side one!

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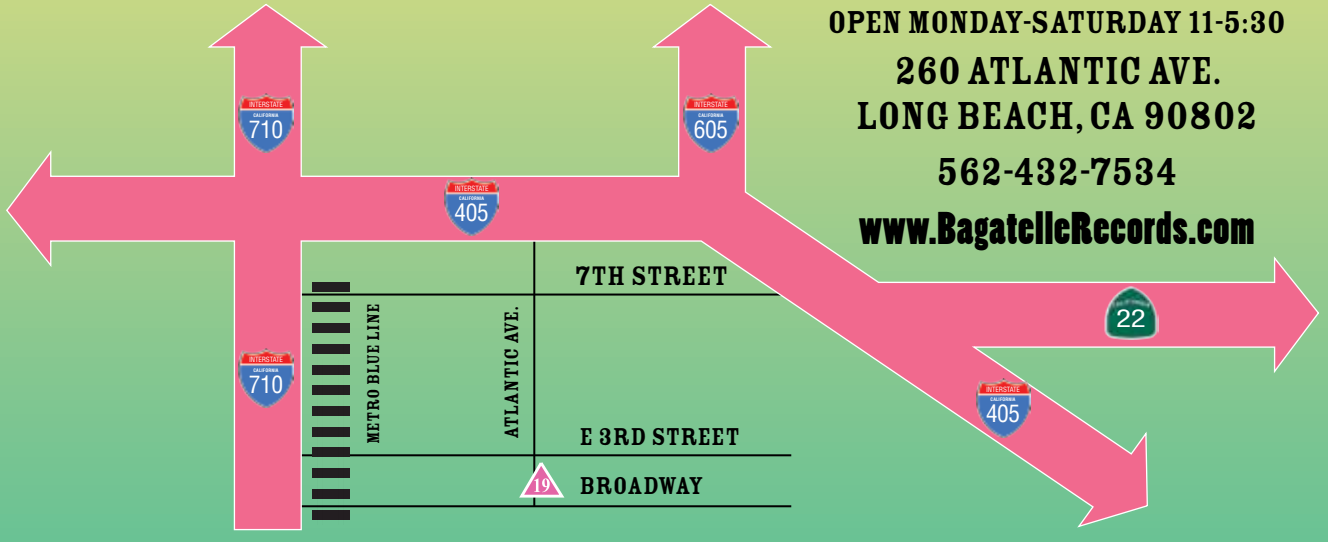

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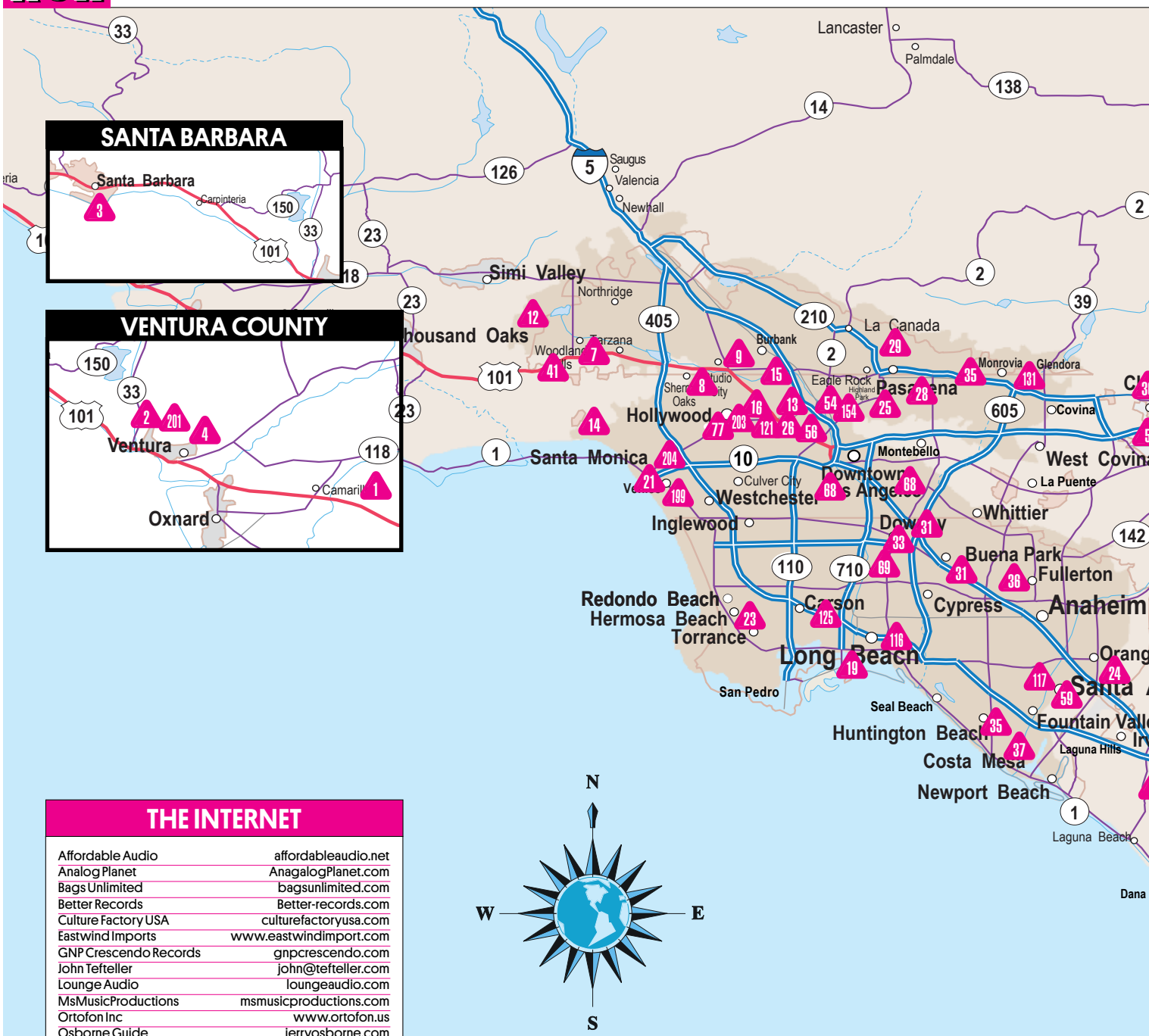

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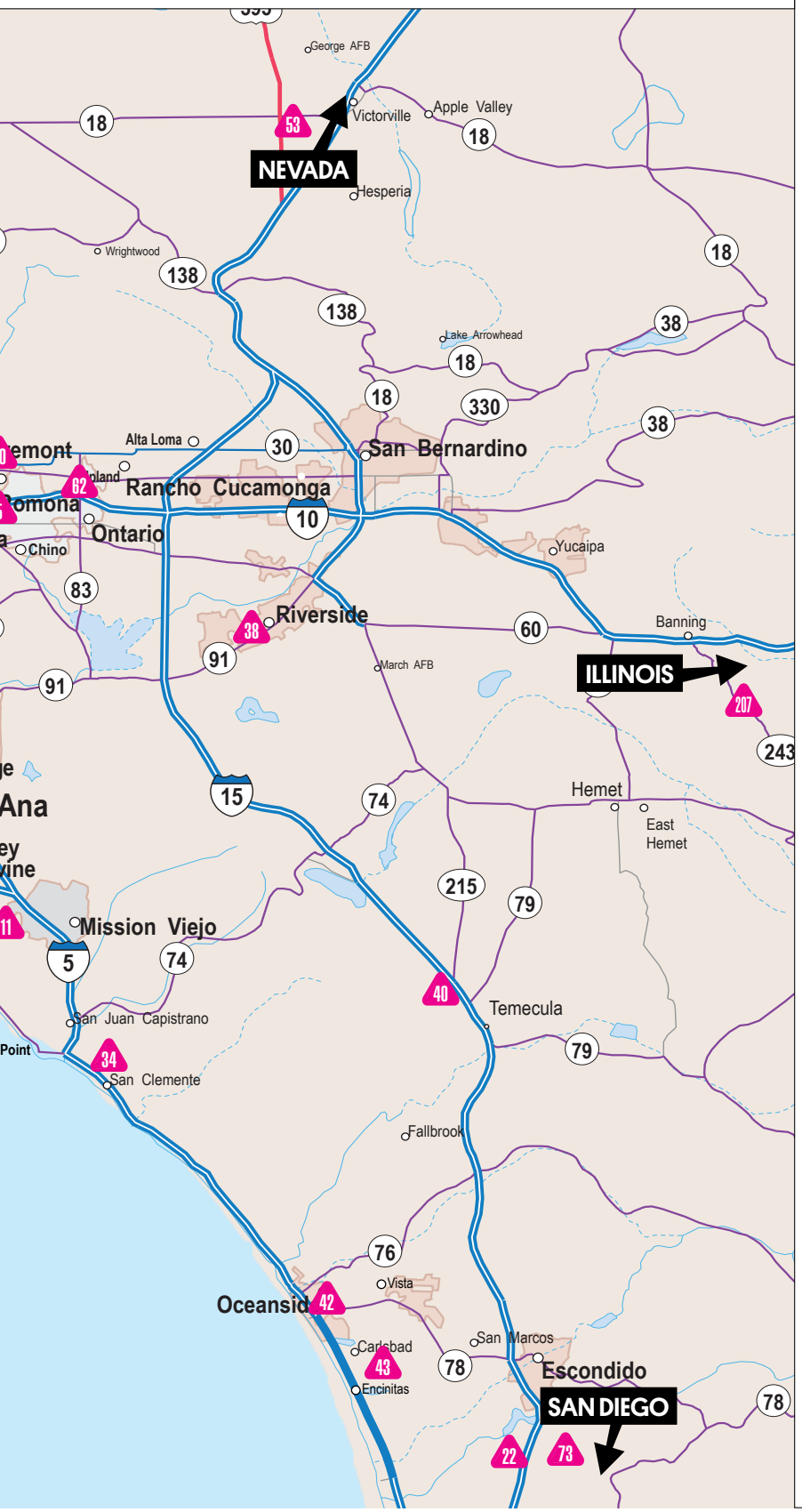

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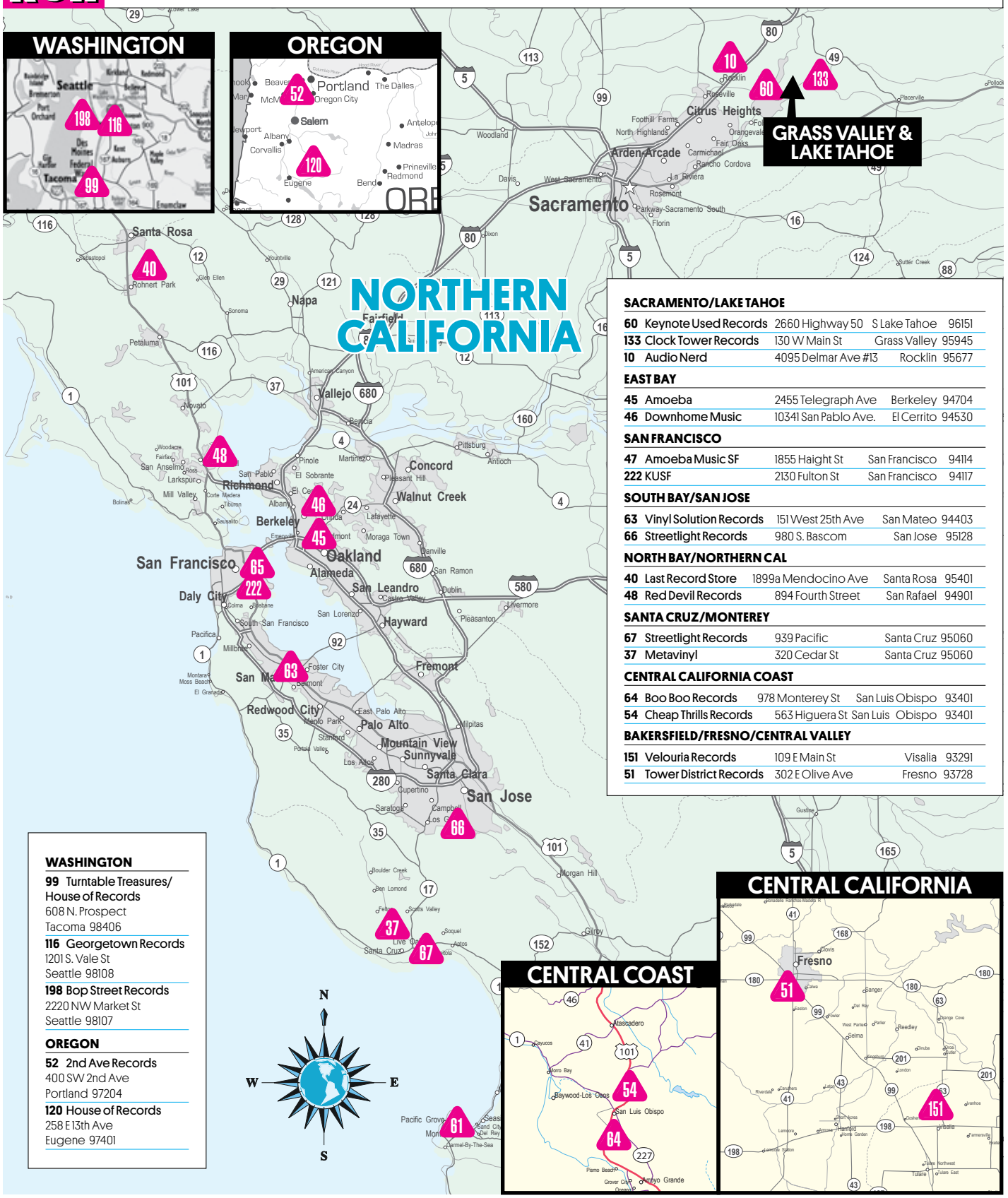

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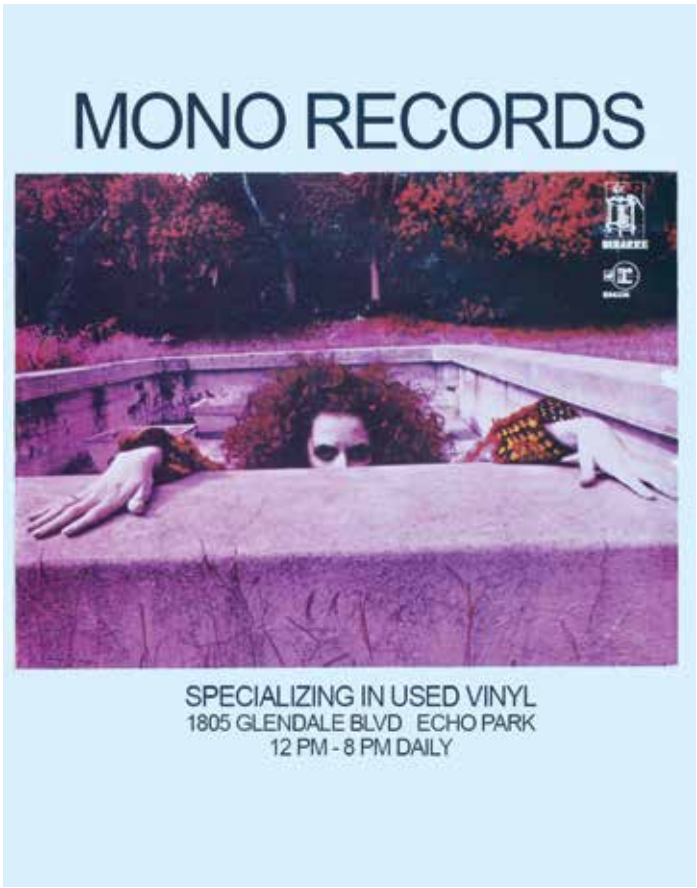

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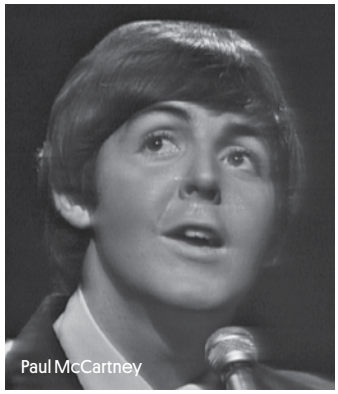
tary, has been broadcast. The program includes comments from Jim Fusilli, Paul Zollo, Ashley Kahn, Scott Freiman, John Kruth, Shawn Colvin and myself.

The radio special continues to air on different stations in 2015, as well as be archived for online listening at the Public Radio Exchange (www.prx.org).

"*Rubber Soul* really feels like the pivot point for the band," says Paul Ingles, the award-winning public radio producer.

"*Rubber Soul* is also when they were experimenting with new instruments and spending more time dialing in the sounds in the studio. That started a trend that would continue and flourish through albums like *Revolver* and *Pepper*."


Paul McCartney

SOFA PRODUCTIONS

Harvey Kubernik has been a music journalist for over 44 years and is the author of 8 books. This past November 2015, Back/Beat/Hal Leonard published Harvey's book on Neil Young, *Heart of Gold*.

Capitol Got It Right

"WITH THEIR OWN, UNIQUE VERSION OF *RUBBER SOUL* AMERICAN Capitol finally got it right," claims proud Canadian Beatlemaniac Gary Pig Gold. "Up until then of course, all of Parlophone's precious Fab LP's had been thoroughly sliced, diced and, I quote, Prepared for release in the U.S.A. with the assistance of Dave Dexter, Jr. With varying degrees of success, shall we say. But no sooner had John Lennon caught sight – not to mention sound – of Capitol's slap-dash 'very special movie soundtrack souvenir album' for Help! than the [in]famous Dex was given the heave-ho by the powers-that-were at EMI's London HQ, leaving substitute Capitol international A&R exec Bill Miller's staff to assemble a *Rubber Soul* for 1965's all-important North American Christmas market.

"And what a fine job they did! For the first time leaving the Beatles' U.K. cover photos and graphics of choice intact – one of the Sixties' most iconic long-playing images, absolutely – Miller's men cobbled together what some still profess to be a 'folk-rock' blend containing two left-over numbers from the British *Help!* LP while removing several of the rougher, as in fully plugged-in tracks from *Rubber Soul* U.K. In doing so however, the core of the band's intricate original running order was wisely left as-is and the ultra-refreshing result was a slightly more 'mellow' perhaps ['mature' was the word many startled reviewers used in '65] package from those hitherto poppy-go-lucky mop-tops. "Nevertheless, discriminating ears from Los Angeles to the Canadian Laurentians immediately took notice ...not the least of which to the very air of savvy sophistication – though some detected second-hand jazz-cigarette smoke as well – which permeated the entire proceedings, from Lennon's provocatively fishy-eyed 'I dare you to find anything wrong with this' gaze on the front cover to the Strat 'n' sitar-soaked sounds within. Why, for starters as we all know, no less than a certain Beach Boy, upon first removing *Rubber Soul* from his turntable, immediately vowed to 'answer' it asap by himself making 'the greatest album ever!' And if, because of that challenge alone, the American Rubber Soul should be hailed, even a half-century later, as a resounding, unqualified utterly game-changing success."

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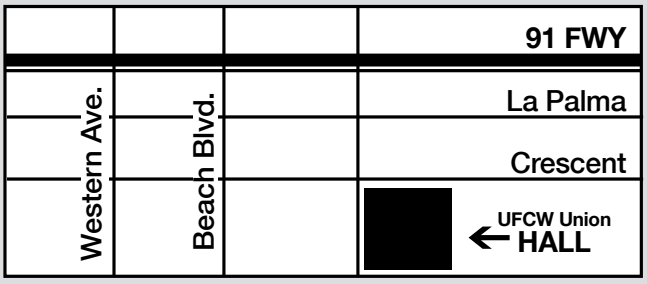

Gene Norman

L.A., disc jockey, jazz promoter and label president

GENE NORMAN, JAZZ impresario, disc jockey and label president, passed away peacefully at his home in Hollywood, California on November 2nd 2015. He was 93.

Born Eugene Nabatoff in Brooklyn, New York and a graduate of the University of Wisconsin at 18, Gene began his radio career in San Francisco, before relocating to Los Angeles in the 1940s.

A jazz buff, Gene Norman soon became Los Angeles' leading disc jockey via stints on various local stations, including KLAC. Turning impresario, he initiated a series of jazz concerts throughout the Southland across two decades, including dates featuring Benny Goodman, Peggy Lee and Erroll Garner. His Blues Jubilee programs at the Shrine Auditorium in the early 1950s attracted some of the first integrated audiences in the United States.

Norman also introduced the Snader Telescriptions, a prototype MTV-styled concept documenting recording personalities of the era, on NBC-TV. He hosted the first-ever televised jazz concert on KTLA, as well as 'The Gene Norman Show' and 'Campus Club' on KHJ.

Gene Norman, 1922-2015

While a DJ at KFWB, Norman organized jazz concerts at venues like the Shrine, the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, and the Hollywood Bowl with artists like Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie and Shorty Rogers under the aegis of 'Gene Norman Presents.' These shows were recorded and released on Decca, Capitol and Modern Records, presaging Norman's later career as a record label owner.

In 1954, Gene opened the Crescendo nightclub on the Sunset Strip, which featured an adjunct venue, the Interlude, upstairs. There he presented virtually every record and cabaret star of the era, including Ella Fitzgerald, Bob Newhart, Johnny Mathis, Stan Kenton, Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass, Lenny Bruce, Don Rickles, Rusty Warren, Mort Sahl, Woody Allen and Louis Armstrong.

Norman continued to put on big concerts, and produced a series of live albums and studio recordings based around his promotions. His own record imprint, GNP Crescendo, was therefore a natural next step, and indeed the label became the focus of the rest of his life. He served as one of the directors of the RIAA, and was elected into the Hall of Fame of the American Association of Independent Music in 1991.

Norman's jazz recordings formed the base of what was to evolve into a vast and varied catalog, including acts such as The Seeds, Joe & Eddie, Queen Ida (who garnered a Grammy for the label), Wrecking Crew regular Billy Strange, Bing Crosby, Gary Richrath and many original film and television soundtracks. The label operated out of offices on the Sunset Strip for more than five decades, moving to less hectic quarters in later years. Up until his death, Norman remained a force in the label's direction, consulting with musician/producer/director son Neil, to whom his legacy now passes.

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but above all
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difference
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and to help others
in need.
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and he will always be in
my heart."

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GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR AUDIO SYSTEM

Plus a review of the new Overlord Audiophile 12Ax7 Tube

BY BOB DONNELLY

ALMOST ANY STEREO SYSTEM CAN be made to sound better with the proper set up. Since there is plenty of information available on basic set up I won't spend a lot of time there, but I will offer some simple and inexpensive tweaks to improve the sound quality of your playback system.

Placement of your components is very important to good playback. If you have separates (preamp, amp, turntable, CD player, etc.) stacking is not a good idea. Each component has an electromagnetic field, which produces noise that can be picked up by the amplification stages of your electronics. Separating them reduces noise and also allows for proper ventilation.

Your turntable should be on a solid foundation to minimize vibration as much as possible because those vibrations can be picked up by the sensitive phono cartridge "smearing" the sound and making it less detailed and focused. Also it's important to keep the speakers away from the turntable for similar reasons. The bass notes in particular can cause the needle to jump during playback. There is plenty more you can accomplish in set-up and placement that I will cover in future issues.

If your stereo equipment was made within the last 20 years it probably has a power cord with a 3-prong "grounded" plug. Unfortunately that ground prong really hurts the sound quality. Without getting technical I'll offer a simple and reversible fix or tweak. For each of your components, buy one of those 3-prong to 2-prong adaptors or "cheater" plugs. The one you want is usually gray and made of solid hard rubber not the hollow plastic one. Starting with your preamp (or receiver if you don't have separates), plug the power cord into the cheater plug and then into the wall outlet. Use the same orientation as if the ground prong were being used. You should hear more dynamics and "air" around the music. It should sound less constrained. It is usually dramatic and easy to hear. Repeat with every component and your sound will have greater energy, dynamics and musicality (involvement). Should you get a low level hum, you only need to ground one component in the system to close the possible "ground loop" and it should go away maintaining most of the improvement.

The correct orientation of the plug will improve imaging (focus), tighten bass and present an ideal soundstage for the recording. The best way to do this is with a multi-meter (voltage meter).

The last thing to do regarding the power cord involves AC plug polarity. Now that you have eliminated the ground prong, the orientation of the plug in the right direction for correct polarity will improve imaging (focus), tighten bass and present a correct soundstage for the recording. The best way to do this is with a multi-meter (voltage meter). Set to "AC." Power the component on with the interconnects disconnected from the rest of system. Hold the black lead between your fingers and then touch the red lead to a screw in the chassis of the component. Note the voltage and then flip the AC plug in the outlet and again touching the red lead to the chassis; observe the meter. The lower number is correct. Repeat for all components. You can of course do it by ear but I have found this method is always correct.

The sonic improvement has been obvious in every system I've done this with and this is a reversible and a mostly-free tweak that you can implement easily.

Keep an eye out for future advice on audio set up.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

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Overlord 12AX7-HD low noise, high definition tube

I RECEIVED A PAIR AUDIOPHILE 12AX7 tube equivalents from "Overlord" that are low noise, long lasting and non-microphonic. Made from modified 1960s' NOS tube stock, they come with a metallic label that doubles as an RF shield and some sort of metallic top I assume is for the same purpose. The Overlords do not run hot at all which may account for their long life (rated 10,000 hours).

I decided to try them in the phono stage of my vintage McIntosh C20 preamp, as that would be the most revealing. After about a 10 hour warm up I listened to a couple LPs I'm very familiar with and often use for system set up (Sergio Mendez *Stillness* & Art Pepper *Plus Eleven*). *Stillness* is useful both for the excellent vocal tracks and the variety of percussion.

The first thing I noticed was the quiet noise floor. At first I was worried that the tubes had rolled off the high frequencies but as soon as the music started it was obvious that was not the case. The vocal had all of the air and detail I was used to hearing and the cymbals plenty of shimmer and attack. What I was hearing more of was body or fullness to the overall presentation. The timber and tonality were correct.

Overlord 12AX7-HD

> "What I was hearing more of was body or fullness."

On *Plus Eleven* I listen for the attack or "punch" of the big band, which was maintained. I also listened for the "bite" of Art Pepper's alto, which, if smoothed out would ruin the realness of this amazing recording. It was still there. Most important is it has to "swing" and it did in spades. The sound was very involving with both LPs.

I think if your system is on the lean side or a bit hard sounding, these tubes would help without being too smooth. If using vintage gear, they seem to tame some of the noise from RF or transformer. Overall I found these tubes to be very detailed yet with very low noise floor.

The retail price is a bit high at $149 each but in today's world of $5,000 power cords, worth a try.

Bob Donnelly is owner of The Analog Shoppe selling vintage vinyl and fine audio. He also is a consultant and head of domestic sales for Impex Records an audiophile reissue company. theanalogshoppe@sbcglobal.net, http://impexrecords.com

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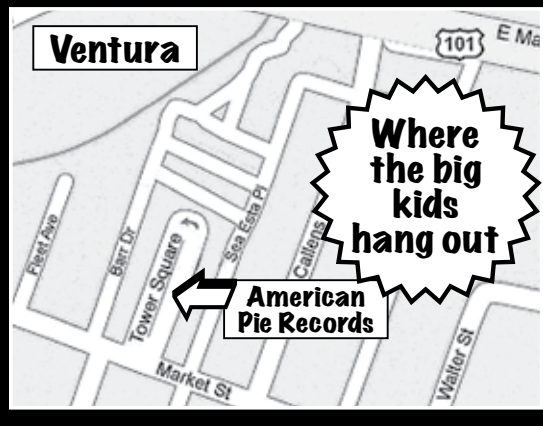

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BY RICHARD ANTONE

Freedom: Jimi Hendrix Experience Atlanta Pop Festival
(Experience Hendrix/Legacy)

ANYONE WHO'S SEEN THE concert documentary *Jimi Hendrix: Electric Church* knows what to expect from this CD, recorded on July 4, 1970, at the second Atlanta International Pop Festival. Hendrix headlined, backed up by stellar bassist Billy Cox and brilliant drummer Mitch Mitchell. He'd played pop festivals from Monterey Pop to Miami Pop and Woodstock. Between his live album Band of Gypsies and

his closing set in the documentary Woodstock he couldn't get any hotter.

In spite of problems with heat and security and food and water running low, this one came together.

Hendrix sizzles on "Spanish Castle Magic," "Red House," "Hear My Train 'A Comin' "and "The Star Spangled Banner" (with audible fireworks in the background). There are spellbinding tacks not available in the film. Adept at rock, blues, R&B and jazz, Hendrix remains an innovative and influential musician.

The Complete Concert by the Sea - Erroll Garner
(Columbia/Legacy)

THIS IS THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY of this classic jazz concert album by pianist Erroll Garner. This 3-CD set includes the original album, featuring peppy versions of "I'll Remember April" and "Where or When." An additional two discs make room for the complete concert's previously unreleased songs such as "The Nearness of You." Garner's genius was using his own dazzling style of playing to breathe new life into oft-covered songs. He expertly handles brisk tempos and ballads with bassist Eddie Calhoun and drummer Denzil Best, making these tunes sparkle like champagne.

Hamilton - Original Broadway Cast Recording
(Atlantic)

REVOLUTIONARY WAR FIGURE and first Treasury Secretary, Alexander Hamilton might have seemed an unlikely choice to build a Broadway musical around. But this show is written by Lin-Manuel Miranda, who brought NYC's bustling Washington Heights to Broadway with "In the Heights." While many lyrics are rapped, the exciting score does retain classic elements of musical theater. Hamilton and the people in his orbit are swiftly introduced, portrayed by a passionate, energetic cast.

The score's soaring melodies and bracing lyrics smoothly advance the narrative and build to a fever pitch. Hamilton, as portrayed by Miranda, is a fiery, prolific writer angry about British colonial rule and slavery. And like any musical theater character, he is capable of bursting into song at any moment. And burst he does on songs like "Alexander Hamilton," the edgy "My Shot" and "Non-Stop," which captures the frenetic pace that *Hamilton* lives and works. "It's Quiet Uptown" slows the pace to capture Hamilton's grief over a loss, in one of the saddest songs ever heard since Jacque Brel's "The Desperate Ones." It's a CD not to be missed.

I Do - Jill Hennessey
(Master Rock)

LIKE HER *LAW AND ORDER* CAST mate Jerry Orbach, there might still be fans of actress Jill Hennessey that don't know she is also an accomplished singer,

as well as a songwriter-guitarist. On her second album, recorded in Austin, she strikes a melancholy chord with yearning vocals and heartfelt songs including the namesake of her hometown, "Edmonton" and the title track.

The Centennial Collection - Billie Holiday

THIS CD MARKS THE LEGENDary jazz singer's 100th anniversary. Holiday continues to inspire as singer and bandleader, from her original compositions "God Bless the Child" and "Billie's Blues" to the anti-lynching protest of "Strange Fruit" and covers of "Summertime" and "All of Me." She was blessed with the ability to phrase and swing like a horn player. A master of what Tony Bennett has called

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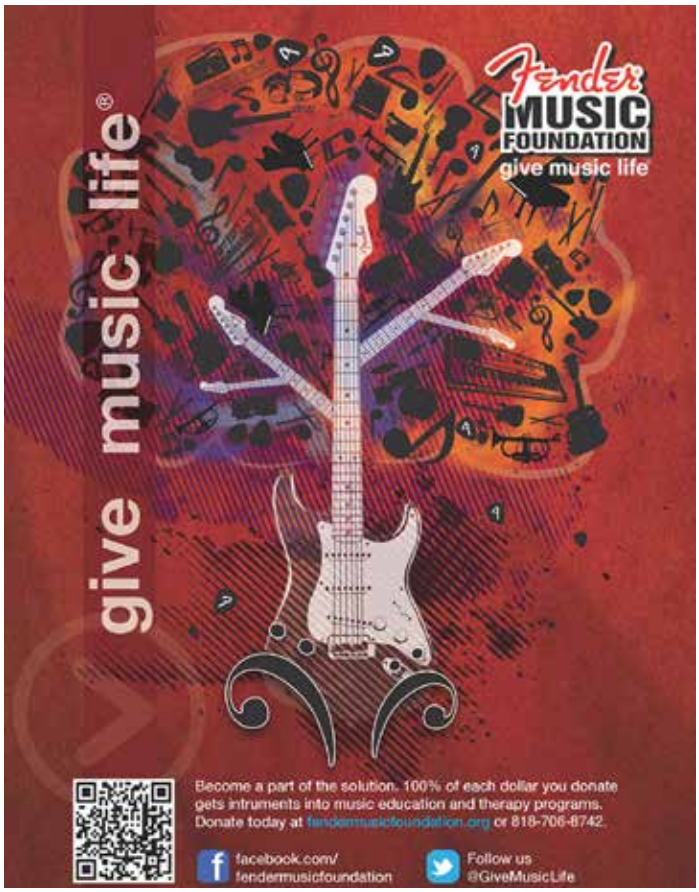
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the art of intimate singing; she has influenced everyone from Frank Sinatra to Cassandra Wilson. While not the only collection of her work, this is a fine introduction.

Coda - Led Zeppelin
(Swan Song/Atlantic)

THIS REISSUE OF CODA HAS FIFteen additional tracks on two discs waxed between 1968 and 1974. This collection of new tracks, alternate mixes and radio

broadcasts make up quite a menu. Would you like to hear "When the Levee Breaks" without the echo? Here it is as "If It Keeps On Raining." "Traveling Riverside Blues", a BBC radio recording, resurfaces here. "Friends" and "Four Sticks," (known here as "Four Hands") features traditional Indian arrangements played by the Bombay Orchestra to chilling effect. Other highlights are "Sugar Mama" from the band's first album sessions and the instrumental "St.Tristan's Sword" from sessions for their third.

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Introducing Darlene Love - Darlene Love
(Columbia)

DON'T LET THE TITLE FOOL YOU. This is neither Darlene Love's first solo album nor her first trip to a recording studio. If you've seen the acclaimed documentary *Twenty Feet from Stardom*, you know she's the lead vocalist behind many Phil Spector productions and background vocalist with The Blossoms, the ubiquitous vocal group who sang with countless artists. Love confidently, soulfully leans into these songs. Standouts include Bruce Springsteen's "Night Closing In" (featuring a scorching solo by E Street Band saxophonist Jake Clemons) and "Just Another Lonely Mile" and Jimmy Webb's "Who Under Heaven." Composer-arranger-producer Steven Van Zandt has lined up a rock-solid group of musicians and killer songs.

A Voice On Air: 1935-1955 - Frank Sinatra
(Columbia/Legacy)

TO NOTE FRANK SINATRA'S 100th anniversary, this exhaustive boxed set has been released, with over ninety tracks from the vocal legend's radio appearances, many on NBC and CBS. Many of them are previously

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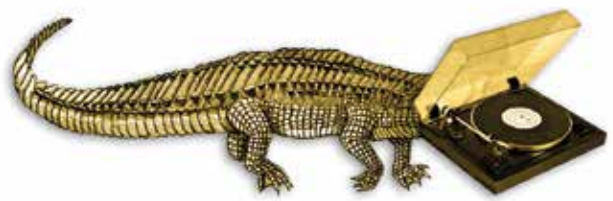

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unreleased. Included are many duets and his earliest radio appearances, including with The Hoboken Four (on *Major Bowes Amateur Hour*) and with The Four Sharps. Sinatra predated the rock and roll era, TV, home video and the iPod as radio's first teen idol. Along with Nat "King" Cole, Peggy Lee and the orchestras of Tommy Dorsey and Axel Stordahl, he popularized many tunes that make up the Great American Songbook. Songs like "I'll Never Smile Again," "As Time Goes By" and "I've Got The World On A String."

***Cumbia Universal* - Gregorio Uribe Big Band (Zoho)**

SHAKING UP NEW YORK CITY'S Nueva Columbiana scene with his latest Kickstarter-funded CD, vocalist and accordion player Gregory Uribe has been a mainstay at NYC's Encuentro festival. His infectious, propulsive album mixes cumbia and other rhythms of Colombia with jazz composers like Duke Ellington and Panamanian legend Ruben Blades, who is heard on the soaring title track. The Beatles' "Come Together" gets a sassy workout with a dazzling horn arrangement.

The Beatles' "Come Together" gets a sassy workout with a dazzling horn arrangement.

Richard Antone is a freelance writer based in New York City. His articles, interviews and reviews have been published in *The Advocate*, *Elmore*, *The Journal News*, *The New York Daily News*, *Metrosource* and other fine publications.

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Charlie Parker and Strings

BY ARMAND LEWIS

Several generations of musicians did not regard themselves as having "made it" until they recorded an album with a string orchestra. In the 1940s, '50s and '60s, this symbolized not only the idea that popular musicians and vocalists could integrate their styles with orchestral/classical themes, but also the "legitimacy" of one's music and the record company's faith in an artist.

Likely the first major jazz musician to have this idea was alto saxophone legend Charlie Parker. Until then (1949) string orchestras had been used almost exclusively for classical music. The closest jazz came to symphonic music had been in the works of George Gershwin, whose compositional style had one foot in the classical world and one in jazz.

Parker, who along with trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie is credited with creating modern jazz, had both a fondness for strings, as well as an and ambition to perform with a classical orchestra. This was initially manifested in Parker casually dropping musical quotes from such classical composers as Igor Stravinsky into his solos in otherwise regular bebop performances.

Parker had no experience with orchestral composing and arranging, though in the early 1950s, he is known to have talked about studying classical composition. Had he not died in 1955, Parker may have branched into those forms as others did in both the later 1950s and 1960s.

Parker's first orchestral recording was a single 78rpm side entitled "Repetition," recorded in 1947/48 for the anthology set *The Jazz Scene*. It featured arranger Neal Hefti conducting a hybrid Stan Kenton type big band combined with a small string orchestra. (Hefti would later go on to write the famous "Batman" theme for the 1960s TV series.)

The Jazz Scene was not released until 1949 and it's possible that the reception to this ambitious survey of contemporary music may have cemented the idea of a strings album in the minds of both Parker and producer Norman Granz. Once Granz was able to sign Parker to a recording contract for his Clef label (later to be re-named Verve), Parker soon recorded his first sessions with a string orchestra. There would be three such orchestral dates for Clef, plus a live *Jazz at the Philharmonic* set with strings recorded at Carnegie Hall.

The resulting records were extremely popular — amounting to Parker's only real hits. Over the years, these sessions would be released and rereleased as 78rpm singles and albums, 33-1/3rpm LPs and CDs in various configurations as Parker's legend grew after his early death. Now, these extremely influential sessions have been collected together in a two CD set chronicling all of Parker's "strings" recordings.

The blistering fast pace of most bop compositions of the time — especially Parker's and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

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Gillespie's own compositions — would be particularly difficult to translate to an orchestral setting, so *The Complete Charlie Parker with Strings* (Verve Select 002259602) features a program heavily weighted towards ballads and standards from the Great American Songbook, with standouts being "Just Friends," They Can't Take That Away From Me" and "I'm in the Mood for Love."

The most outstanding example is "April in Paris," which actually charted as a top forty hit when it was released. As with most "jazz with strings" recordings, the softer, smoother strings backgrounds are played in something of a counterpoint to Parker's energetic alto lead.

The same is true of George Gershwin's "Summertime," which had recently been a hit for New Orleans soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet. With its orchestral roots as part of George Gershwin's jazz opera "Porgy & Bess," Parker and the orchestra are able to completely integrate their respective styles.

Parker's string recordings started a trend of jazz musicians recording with strings — sometimes successfully, sometimes not. The ensuing controversy among jazz fans over these LPs (pro and con) did little to stop the flow of orchestral jazz LPs over the years. Everyone from Clifford Brown to Ornette Coleman would record with string orchestras at one time or another.

Jazz musicians continue to record with strings to this day, though today they are more likely to be backed with a string quartet or small ensemble rather than a symphony orchestra. Parker too may have ultimately recorded with smaller string groups, but the sessions he did leave us with remain some of the best of the form.

Armand Lewis buys and sells rare Jazz LPs. He can be reached at mrbluenote@peoplepc.com

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Countryside IL. Southwest Chicago Record and CD Show. 6201 Joliet Rd, $3. 10am-4pm. $3 847-409-9656

SUNDAY DECEMBER 13

Newark, CA. Newark Record Swap Meet. Newark Pavilion 6430 Thornton. $3.50 7am-1pm. 408-263-5127

SATURDAY DECEMBER 19

New York City, NY. The New York City Record and CD Show 440 W. 57th Street. $6. 10am-4pm. 973-209-6067

SUNDAY DECEMBER 27

Buena Park CA. Greater Orange County Record Show NO SHOW THIS WEEKEND.

SUNDAY JANUARY 2

Pasadena, CA. Pasadena City College Flea Market and Record Swap. NO SHOW THIS WEEKEND

Chicagoland Record Collectors Show

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SATURDAY JANUARY 16

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